

# Claims

- [c1] 1. An automotive instrument panel, comprising:  
a substrate member defining the general shape of the instrument panel and having lateral end portions configured to confront respective portions of adjacent door panels of an automobile in which the instrument panel is to be used; and  
a pliable cover layer disposed on said substrate member;  
said substrate member together with said cover layer defining resilient engagement areas proximate said lateral end portions of said substrate member which contact the adjacent door panels when the door panels are in closed positions.
- [c2] 2. The instrument panel of claim 1, wherein said cover layer extends beyond said lateral end portions of said substrate member to form respective flexible flanges that contact the respective door panels in the closed positions.
- [c3] 3. The instrument panel of claim 2, wherein said cover layer deforms to accommodate the door panels in their closed positions.

- [c4] 4. The instrument panel of claim 1, wherein said substrate member comprises a central substrate section and first and second lateral substrate sections, said first and second lateral substrate sections flexibly coupled to said central substrate section by said cover layer, said cover layer on said first and second lateral substrate sections contacting the door panels in their closed positions.
- [c5] 5. The instrument panel of claim 4, wherein said first and second lateral substrate sections are displaced toward said central substrate section to accommodate the door panels in their respective closed positions.
- [c6] 6. The instrument panel of claim 1, wherein said substrate member and said cover layer are formed from injection moldable polymers, and said pliable cover layer is molded over said substrate member.
- [c7] 7. An automotive interior trim assembly, comprising:  
an instrument panel including a substrate member defining the general shape of the instrument panel and having opposed lateral ends, said instrument panel further including a pliable, first cover layer disposed on said substrate member and cooperating with said substrate member to define resilient engagement areas proximate said lateral ends of said

substrate member;  
a door panel hingedly secured adjacent said instrument panel, proximate one of said lateral ends of said substrate member, for movement between open and closed positions; and  
said door panel contacting said instrument panel at one of said resilient engagement areas when said door panel is in said closed position.

[c8] 8. The trim assembly of claim 7, wherein said cover layer extends beyond said lateral ends of said substrate member to define respective flexible flanges in said resilient engagement areas, said flexible flanges deforming to accommodate said door panel in said closed position.

[c9] 9. The trim assembly of claim 7, wherein said instrument panel further comprises a central substrate section and first and second lateral substrate sections, said first and second lateral substrate sections flexibly coupled to said central substrate section by said first cover layer to define said resilient engagement areas;  
said door panel contacting one of said lateral substrate sections of said instrument panel when said door panel is in the closed position.

[c10] 10. The trim assembly of claim 9, wherein said lateral substrate section is displaced toward said central sub-

strate section when said door panel is in said closed position.

[c11] 11. The trim assembly of claim 9, wherein said door panel comprises first and second door substrate sections and a pliable, second cover layer disposed over said first and second door substrate sections;

said first and second door substrate sections flexibly coupled by said second cover layer; and

said second door substrate section contacting one of said first and second lateral substrate sections of said instrument panel when said door panel is in said closed position.

[c12] 12. The trim assembly of claim 11, wherein at least one of said second door substrate sections and said lateral substrate sections is displaced when said door panel is in said closed position.

[c13] 13. A method of finishing an interior of an automobile, comprising:

installing an instrument panel within the interior of the automobile between laterally opposed door panels of the automobile, the instrument panel including a rigid substrate member and a pliable cover layer disposed over the substrate member, the substrate member and cover layer together defining resilient

engagement areas at lateral ends of the substrate member;  
contacting a door panel of the automobile with the instrument panel, adjacent a lateral end of the substrate member, when the door panel is in a closed position; and  
displacing part of the instrument panel to accommodate the door panel.

[c14] 14. The method of claim 13, wherein the cover layer extends beyond the lateral ends of the substrate member to define respective lateral flanges, and wherein displacing the instrument panel includes deforming the lateral flanges.

[c15] 15. The method of claim 13, wherein the substrate member comprises a central substrate section and first and second lateral substrate sections flexibly coupled by the cover layer, and wherein displacing the instrument panel includes displacing at least one of the first and second lateral substrate sections toward the central substrate section.